DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 171 CE 080 211

AUTHOR Frampton, Derek; Hull, Lynn
TITLE Engaging with the Learning Gateway: A Guide for Colleges.
INSTITUTION Further Education Development Agency, London (England).
ISBN ISBN-1-85338-541-7
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 50p.
AVAILABLE FROM Further Education Development Agency, Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EH, United Kingdom. Tel: 020-7840-5302; Fax: 020-7840-5401; e-mail: publications@feda.ac.uk; Web site: http://www.feda.ac.uk.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accreditation (Institutions); Agency Cooperation; *Articulation (Education); Basic Skills; Blacks; Career Education; Case Studies; Check Lists; Clubs; College Programs; Community Education; Conventional Instruction; *Counseling Techniques; Definitions; *Education Work Relationship; Educational Quality; English (Second Language); Evaluation Criteria; Extracurricular Activities; Foreign Countries; Glossaries; Guidelines; Individualized Instruction; *Nontraditional Education; Nontraditional Occupations; Outreach Programs; Partnerships in Education; Performance Factors; Postsecondary Education; Program Development; Program Evaluation; Quality Control; Refugees; Skill Development; Student Organizations; Success; Womens Education; Workshops; *Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS England; National Vocational Qualifications (England); Wales

ABSTRACT

This guide explains how staff at further education (FE) colleges throughout England and Wales can engage in the Learning Gateway, which is a program featuring personal advisers, "front end" assessment and support, and life skills training to help disengaged 16- and 17-year-olds re-engage in education, training, and employment. Chapter 1 provides background information on the study of 13 FE colleges that was conducted to identify good practices in the area of facilitating youths' transition into further education and employment. Chapters 2-7, which include a total of 26 case studies, each contain the following elements: issues for colleges; current good practice; key success factors; and a checklist of activities for colleges. The topics of chapters 2-7 are as follows: the learner at the center and working together; the learning pathway; into the Learning Gateway; individual learning programs; mainstream learning; and evaluation and quality assurance. Chapter 8 is a checklist of actions for colleges that lists specific criteria against which colleges can evaluate their current performance in each of the areas discussed in chapters 2-7. Appended are the following: glossary; bibliography listing seven publications; and phone numbers/e-mail addresses of four project contacts and contact persons from the 13 colleges studied. (MN)

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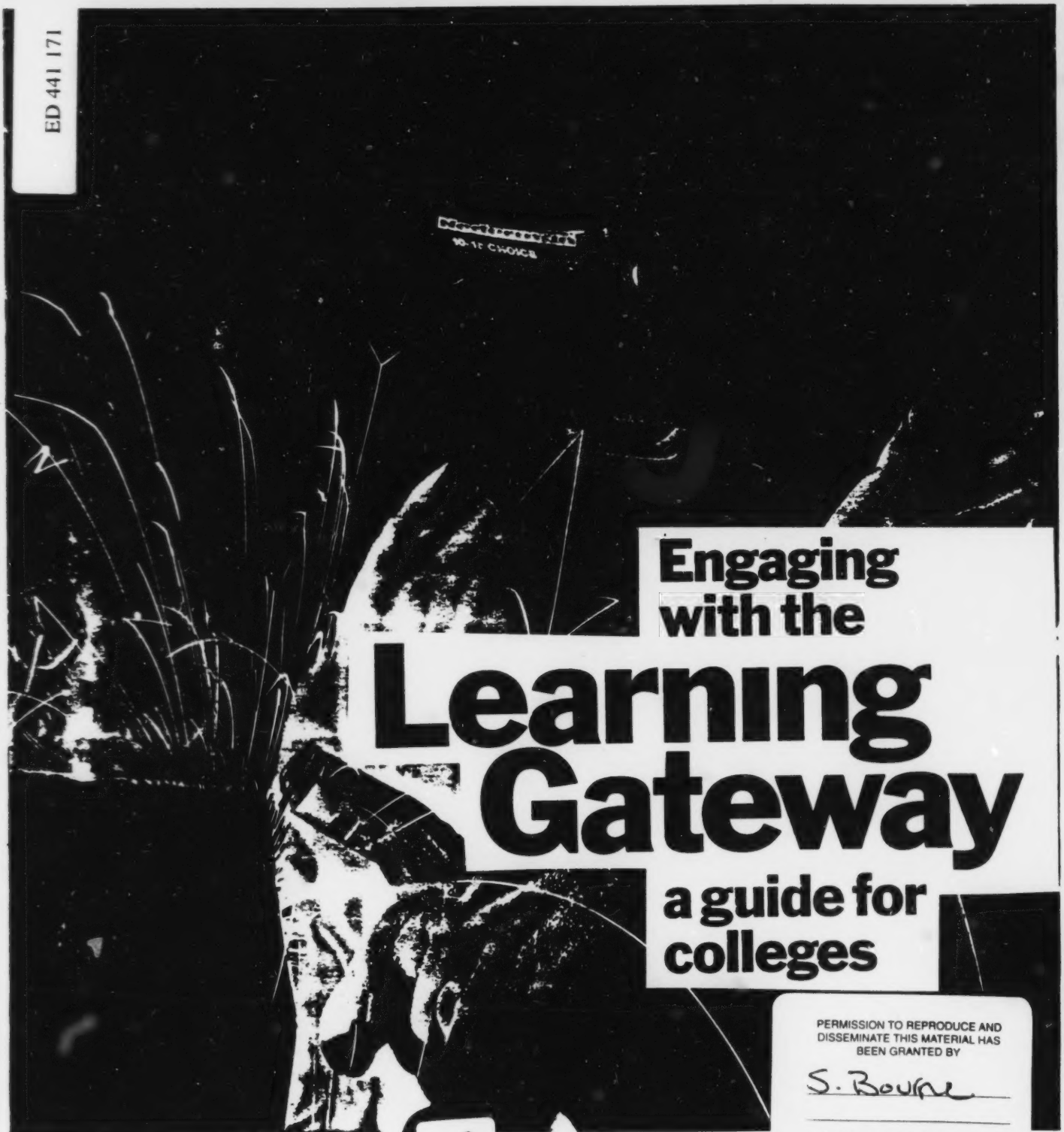

Engaging with the Learning Gateway

a guide for colleges

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Engaging with the Learning Gateway

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and Lynn Hull

Published by FEDA

Feedback and orders should be sent to FEDA publications
Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EF
Tel: 020 7840 5302/4 Fax: 020 7840 5401
FEDA on the Internet: www.feda.ac.uk

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Editors: Jennifer Rhys and Huw Jones
Designers: Dave Shaw and Kevin Ashill
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Barnsley College, page 14; Pre-vocational School, Broxbourne,
Hertford Regional College, page 15; Knowsley Community College,
page 17; Swansea College, page 30
Printer: Blackmore Ltd, Shaftesbury, Dorset

ISBN 1 85338 541 7

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About this publication

Engaging with the Learning Gateway: a guide for colleges is designed to:

- Encourage colleges to become involved in the Learning Gateway
- Offer guidance to colleges who are contributing to the Learning Gateway or providing learning opportunities directly for disengaged young people
- Identify existing expertise and disseminate good practice in the sector
- Promote a partnership approach to re-engaging young people in education, training and employment.

It draws on research into provision for disengaged young people aged 14–17 in 13 colleges in England and Wales undertaken in 1999.

Chapters 2–6 report on the issues and good practice that emerged, in sections structured to identify:

- Issues for colleges
- Current good practice
- Key success factors
- A checklist of activities for colleges

and contains college examples and some comments from students.

Chapter 7 identifies the main issues involved in quality assurance of that provision.

The final chapter, *Actions for colleges*, summarises the key points as a checklist both for colleges whose provision is already well embedded and for those who wish to create such provision.

About the authors

Derek Frampton is a consultant in further education. Lynn Hull is a Development Adviser for FEDA specialising in the 14–19 phase of learning.

1 Background

FE – a history of learning

The bread and butter business of further education has always been to provide young people with a second chance to acquire the skills and qualifications they need to get a job and sustain a working life. In doing so it has developed new ways of learning and new forms of support for learners. Such flexibility and innovation have enabled young people to reach out and grasp the educational ladder by providing them with:

- Opportunities to learn basic and key skills
- New forms of accreditation
- More diverse and congenial pathways to qualifications and employment.

Given this background:

- What are the strengths of this experience that colleges can contribute to making a success of the Learning Gateway?
- What can we learn from colleges' existing good practice?
- What works best?

The FEDA survey

In 1998/99 the DfEE commissioned a report to identify the extent and character of colleges' involvement in first-round New Start Partnerships, and their potential contribution to the Learning Gateway initiative to be launched in September 1999.

A questionnaire was therefore sent to 50 colleges that were established providers for disengaged young people and had received favourable reports from a recent FEFC inspection.

On the basis of responses 13 colleges were chosen for the survey. They were selected for the volume and range of their involvement with disengaged young people as well as for representing a geographical spread. Following the collection of additional information via questionnaire, the colleges were visited in spring 1999 when discussions were held with the relevant senior manager, a group of delivery staff, and key staff from other partners where appropriate. A structured group discussion was also held with students in each college.

The research drew upon:

- Documentary material and data from the colleges
- A FEDA development seminar involving the participating colleges
- An expert seminar held in the early summer by DfEE and FEDA for a wider group of professionals representing a range of other agencies dealing with young people in this category.

The Learning Gateway

As part of its Connexions strategy, the Government is committed to providing better opportunities for all young people to participate in learning and achieve to the highest level possible. It is particularly concerned to engage in learning those 16 and 17 year olds who lack the basic skills, qualifications and attitudes to enter education and training opportunities at level 2 or who have become detached from learning altogether.

Building on the lessons learnt from New Start and other similar initiatives the Learning Gateway for 16 and 17 year olds was introduced in September 1999. It provides a client-centred approach to support for young people who have drifted away from learning and need additional help to enter mainstream learning opportunities.

Both New Start and the Learning Gateway will influence the development of the Connexions Service – the new youth support service for all 13–19 year olds – which will be phased in from April 2001.

Target group

Many young people will make a successful transition from school to subsequent learning with relative ease. The Learning Gateway is targeted at those 16 and 17 year olds who are vulnerable at this transition phase. The priority is those who are disengaged from learning, but the Learning Gateway also aims to help those who are in danger of dropping out of learning because they lack the right skills or qualifications, or because they face significant personal and social obstacles. These young people may be:

- Disaffected by attitude – for example as a result of school exclusion, long-term truancy or low levels of school achievement
- Disadvantaged by circumstances or characteristics – for example, homelessness, health problems, care history, family difficulties, offending behaviour.

Design of the Learning Gateway

The design of the Learning Gateway is illustrated by Figure 1 (opposite), which has been developed from the DfEE's *Learning Gateway specification* sent to all relevant agencies, including colleges, in May 1999.

Main features

The Learning Gateway is being delivered jointly by careers services and TECs but a multi-agency approach is vital, with local implementation plans agreed by all key partners – including the FE sector. The three most important and distinctive features of the Learning Gateway are:

1. Personal advisers
2. The 'front end'
3. Life skills.

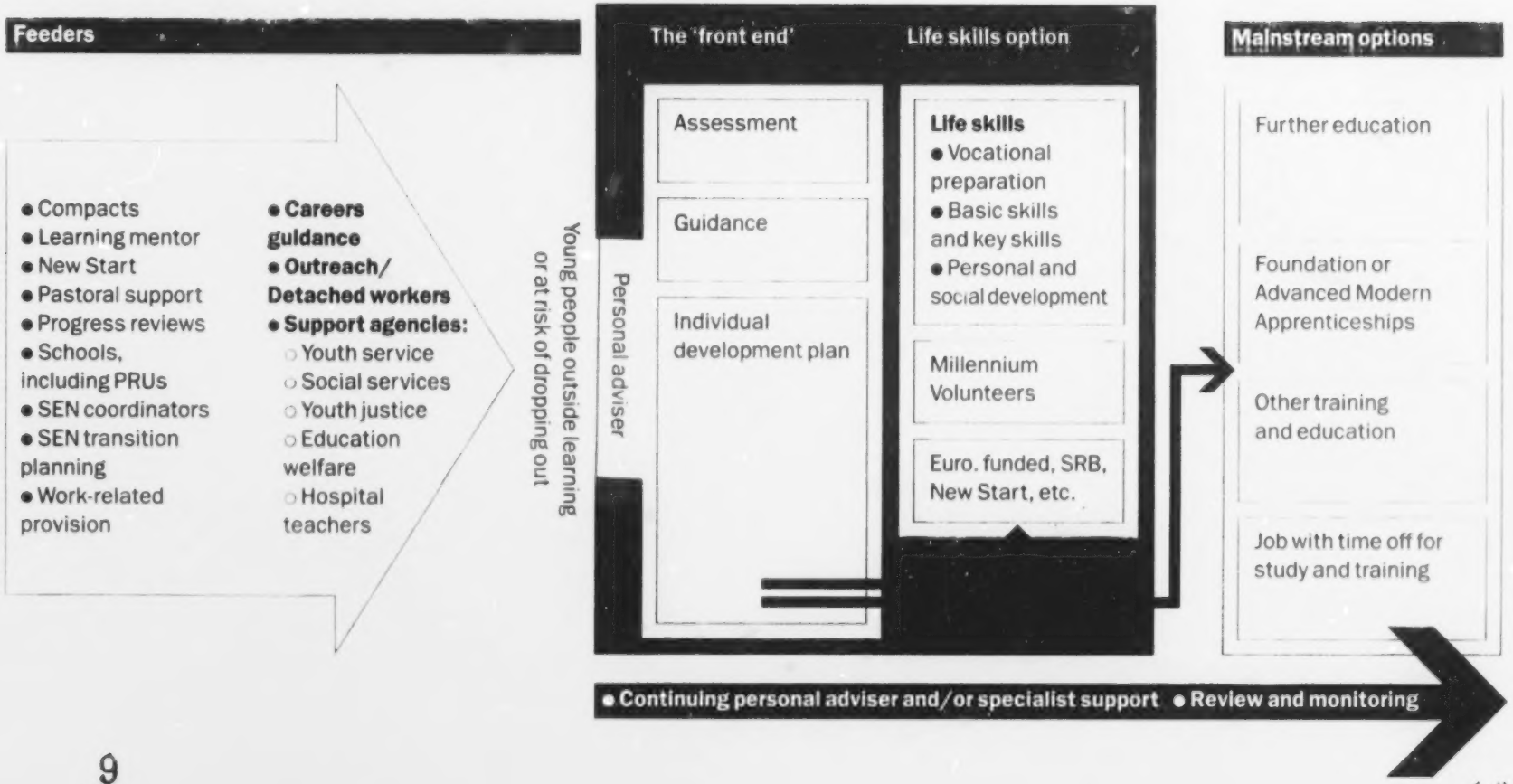
1. Personal advisers

Personal advisers are perhaps the single most important feature of the Learning Gateway and bind together the 'front end' and life skills, providing seamless support for an individual. They provide help on a case-worker basis including:

- Initial assessment
- Guidance
- Planning
- Review
- Support.

The first requirement of the personal adviser is to get alongside the young person and quickly build a relationship of trust.

Figure 1. The Learning Gateway for 16 and 17 year olds



2. The 'front end'

Assessment, guidance and planning cover different aspects of the young person's development, not simply further education, training or employment. They include social welfare, health and, where necessary, criminal justice. A thorough, client-centred assessment process is an essential component of the Learning Gateway. It should build on any existing assessments.

The initial assessment will result in the young person agreeing an individual development plan that sets out the results of the assessment, planned action and the support to be provided.

The outcome of this assessment and guidance will be progression to a suitable option. This may mean a mainstream learning opportunity (if possible level 2, or equivalent) such as a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship or FE course, or undertaking a programme of activity arranged through the life skills option.

Some young people may need to be referred to a specialist agency (for drugs or counselling, for example) outside the Learning Gateway. There is no fixed duration for the 'front end'.

3. Life skills

The life skills phase allows a flexible, tailor-made package of activities and support to be put together to meet the identified needs of the young person. The aim of life skills is to improve motivation and confidence, develop key skills and personal effectiveness skills and provide different work and learning opportunities.

Within life skills, there is a common core of basic and key skills development, vocational preparation and personal development. The needs and priorities of each individual determine the balance between these elements. Programmes are arranged in manageable sequences of activity and units of learning, with each end-point clearly in sight. Progress is frequently reviewed so that learners can see what has to be done to remain on target.

Outcomes

Much of the learning activity is focused on developing employability, active citizenship and personal development with a view to progression to mainstream learning. Awards and qualifications can be used in the process, but they are not the principal outcomes.

It is important for the learner and the personal adviser to keep up-to-date, detailed records of learning and achievement while on the Learning Gateway. These records are vital for keeping track of progress as learners move through and out of the different elements of the Learning Gateway.

2 The learner at the centre: working together

As the model in Figure 1 (see page 5) shows, the Learning Gateway is designed to place the learner in a three-stage process, culminating in full re-engagement with learning and using an appropriate mix of further education, training and employment.

Many agencies will be involved to ensure a successful outcome for the learner, and their effectiveness in working together will partly determine the success of the initiative. Colleges potentially have a major role as partners in making contact with disengaged young people and providing them with appropriate learning opportunities.

Issues for colleges

- What is the most effective form of partnership for colleges providing for disengaged young people?
- How can colleges use partnership to take learning to disengaged young people?

Current good practice

In the 13 project colleges providing for disengaged young people through New Start-type partnerships, experience has shown that colleges can develop genuine and effective partnerships in different ways and for different purposes. By way of example, seven different purposes of relevant partnerships are presented below:

i. Partnerships that strategically manage and coordinate funds and systems without complex bureaucracy
ii. Coordinating multi-agency provision in the community
iii. Coordinating outreach provision
iv. Establishing local centres
v. Community partnership centres
vi. Reaching young learners, and their families
vii. Youth worker outreach.

i. Partnerships that strategically manage and coordinate funds and systems without complex bureaucracy

Effectiveness in this type of partnership has been achieved by staff from different agencies working together and sharing information effectively. Such staff will often be key workers from the Youth Service or LEA office who will have a presence and a role in the college, working directly with the young people and with college staff. (See *Case study 1: Bury College* overleaf.)

Case study 1 | **Bury College** | Social and leisure activities form part of students' induction period

At Bury College the LEA fully funds an alternative year 11 programme. An Alternative Programme Manager is the keystone of the guidance and assessment process, working closely with, and within, the college.

Referrals come from:

- A pupil learning centre – working in schools
- The Education Welfare Service – outside school provision
- Ex-residential or special school EBD referrals.

Pupils are filtered through an 'Education Otherwise' panel to the LEA Alternative Programme Manager for interview and initial assessment. The young person is then accompanied to the college for interview and supported in the design of an individual learning plan. A pupil may join either mainstream or specially-designed college provision. Induction is the same as for other students.

Those with challenging behaviour are initially kept separate in a small group and gradually introduced to mainstream provision.

The Alternative Programme Manager and the college manager act as joint gatekeepers in the referral process. They share guidance and support and the design of individual pathways for the students.

ii. Coordinating multi-agency provision in the community

Colleges' vast array of staff expertise and range of provision mean they are well placed to deliver guidance, support and programmes in the community. Many are adept at:

- Developing multi-agency provision, including shared delivery of individual learning programmes
- Integrating the use of support and guidance staff both inside the college and in the community.

Case study 2 | **Bishop Auckland College** | At Bishop Auckland College, one key worker is seconded from schools for a 'Network Challenge' programme while the college itself employs a youth worker and has another on attachment from the Youth Service. Each of these workers contributes their skills and expertise to provide support for young people both within the college and in the community generally.

▶ **Highbury College** uses a local estate lock-up garage to deliver motor vehicle units

iii. Coordinating outreach provision

Colleges are well placed to develop and coordinate a wide range of outreach opportunities using youth and community workers, Careers Service, voluntary and training organisations. Such partnerships enable them to reach the disengaged who might otherwise have been inaccessible to them.

Outreach provision of guidance, support and learning, at the right time, in the right place, for those who would not otherwise participate, attracts young people back into learning and then into the college environment.

Community-based learning opportunities (e.g. IT, work skills such as motor vehicle maintenance, and key skills development) offer reassuring small steps to the disengaged learner towards subsequent integration in mainstream activities.

Specially tailored provision can reach community groups such as young mothers' groups and religious and ethnic minorities. It often includes tasters, key skill elements – such as literacy and IT – and guidance. Colleges identify particular target groups and include strategies to reach out to them within their overall strategic plans.

"I had my baby and my Mum took me down the open evening. They didn't look down at me. They said I could choose to do things. Useful things"

15-year-old student on a Gateway to NVQ programme

Case study 3	**Hertford Regional College**	Hertford Regional College provides community-based family workshops in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in partnership with REACH, a voluntary sector organisation.
Case study 4	**Park Lane College**	Park Lane College, Leeds, delivers its Return to Learn basic skills programme for Afro-Caribbean school refusers in a number of local community premises.

iv. Establishing local centres

Colleges are increasingly developing local delivery of specific skills in purpose-designed premises.

Case study 5	**Highbury College**	See photos above	Highbury College, Portsmouth, uses a local estate lock-up garage to deliver motor vehicle units, while Solihull College runs a workshop to repair and renovate bicycles.
Case study 6	**Newham Sixth Form College**	The Newham Partnership has a number of local premises for specific programmes such as motor vehicle work and IT for women. Newham Sixth Form College is involved as one of these centres providing NVQ level 2 in retail.

Many colleges have some form of taster course or key skills delivery in local community premises.

v. Community partnership centres
Community-based learning centres are being developed by multi-agency partnerships and by colleges themselves.

Case study 7 | Swansea College Swansea College has created learning centres in schools with the help of the LEA. These are used to deliver after-hours programmes and guidance to both pupils and parents. The college provides the equipment for skills acquisition in the centres and also runs homework clubs. The college also employs a full-time mentor for off-site students.

vi. Reaching young learners, and their families
Many colleges reach parents and family groups in ways designed to provide adults and 14–16 year olds with access to social and life skills. In areas where many young people have grown up in families in which no adult has worked in the lifetime of their children, basic/key skills development can sow the seeds of employability which in turn can transform social and economic aspirations.

Case study 8 | Barnsley College Barnsley College provides classes for parents based in primary schools to enable them to help their children to read. These family learning classes also help the parents strengthen their own literacy and communication skills.

Several colleges customise outreach for the homeless in foyers, and for those on remand in bail hostels.

vii. Youth worker outreach
Colleges increasingly employ youth workers and link with local youth and community worker programmes to reach young people and locate the college's offer in particular communities. Some colleges send key workers and guidance teams to outreach sites and others use a detached youth worker. Such partnerships can enable colleges and youth services to take part together in wider, sometimes regional, networks for skills delivery. (See *Case study 9: Park Lane College* opposite.)

Key success factors
Provision for the disengaged is most successful when:

- Colleges are full partners rather than sub-contracted service providers
- All members of the partnership are involved in planning strategy so that it is coherent
- Partnership operations are allowed to develop dynamically through personal contacts and working arrangements
- There is a properly integrated partnership that can:
  - Reduce bureaucracy
  - Integrate staff
  - Set common standards and check progress
- Provision is operated on an outreach basis and:
  - Is linked with Youth Service, or local community groups, with 'street credibility'
  - Is delivered as locally as possible and customised for local groups
  - Gives learners access to the college's resources
  - Relates learning to work skills and perceived opportunities
  - Involves family members where appropriate.

Case study 9 | Park Lane College | Older members of the local community benefit from the Sunday Lunch Club

Park Lane College, Leeds, has run an Options and Choices programme of transferable skills for several years in conjunction with youth workers, offering OCN accreditation where appropriate. The college has also provided after-school clubs in various local centres with the support of community workers. These outreach initiatives, together with a diverse programme of short vocational tasters, have led to the development of community-based projects that provide multi-skilling opportunities for the learners involved in the project and multiple benefits for the recipients of the project outcomes.

One project has provided a community house garden for the elderly and local children, and is aimed at improving social relations for the lonely and elderly in the community. Another, a Sunday Lunch Club for the elderly, achieves the same objectives while building self-confidence, team working and other transferable skills for the young people involved.

Checklist for colleges

- Is the college working with all relevant partners to meet the needs of disengaged young people?
- Is the partnership operating strategically and coherently so that activities are integrated and effective?
- Does the college evaluate with its partners its own, and the partnership's, effectiveness?
- Does the college provide, or work with others to provide advice, guidance and support services in the community?
- Does the college provide learning opportunities at outreach locations as a means of attracting young people into college?
- Do users of outreach provision have access to college resources?
- Is such provision effectively coordinated with that of other partners and providers?
- How could such provision re-engage more young people in further education and training?

3 The learning pathway

Success with young disengaged people will depend upon how they see the relevance and value of the learning pathway and where it leads. Colleges have a major part to play as providers and designers of the process that can re-engage and motivate young people.

Issue for colleges

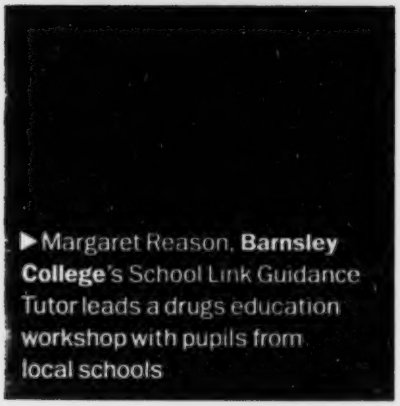
- What characteristics should a learning pathway have to re-engage and motivate disengaged young people?

Current good practice

Colleges have a lot of experience in designing learning to improve retention and achievement, and many have tried and tested good practice in re-engaging young people.

The response of some colleges to disengaged young people has resulted in a learning experience, influenced by the 'Gateway' concept, which typically provides:

- A personal tutor who:
  - May be the initial personal adviser
  - Helps the student to construct and fulfil the individual development plan
  - Is a constant feature of the individual's development process
  - Identifies particular support needs as they arise
  - Deals with pastoral matters and can refer to the full range of college support services
- Portfolio accreditation – colleges increasingly recognise the benefits of early accreditation arising out of the initial guidance and support process. This is used to motivate and provide early experience of achievement. It is clear that the least threatening form of accredited work at this stage is the gradual accumulation of evidence allowed in portfolio accreditation. ASDAN provides an appropriate and widely used accreditation, but there are several others available
- A phased introduction to an accredited vocational course – often by transition from a chosen taster which itself can be the start towards NVQ 1 and linked with accredited key skills.



▶ Margaret Reason, **Barnsley College**'s School Link Guidance Tutor leads a drugs education workshop with pupils from local schools

Case study 10 | **Barnsley College** | See photos above | Barnsley College provides and funds taster days for all year 9 pupils and offers externally funded 'master classes' for years 10 and 11. These programmes link into the service provided by a network of guidance tutors who work in all local schools. Their role is to provide individual guidance as an entitlement for all year 11 pupils. They also have a widening participation brief, which is expanding, through project work around, for example, 'World of Work' (ASDAN), drugs education and local history archives. All are funded by the college.

Some year 11 pupils who present emotional/behavioural difficulties or have been excluded from schools are provided with individualised programmes on an infill basis in a variety of settings. They are funded individually by the LEA.

Case study 11 | **Highbury College** | Highbury College, Portsmouth, provides a programme for the LEA – Project 90 – aimed at re-engaging school refusers. Required attendance increases from one half day to a 16-hour week. The vocational element, which may be NVQ 1 in skills such as hairdressing or motor vehicle maintenance, is introduced early on in the programme. There is also some opportunity for GCSE work where appropriate.

The 'gently sloping ramp' model of phasing-in skills, plus the regime of an accredited course, is widely regarded as the most effective way to develop learner confidence. However, many colleges also point to the importance of an early introduction to 'hands-on' work skills for many students if motivation is to be sustained and focused. This has implications for the operation of the Learning Gateway. The pace of learning has to be fast enough to motivate but slow enough to be unthreatening. This requires close monitoring through individual tutorials.

A phased introduction can basically be achieved in three ways:

Infill to vocational programmes

This needs to be designed as part of a longer-term individual programme following initial assessment and guidance. The vocational element should be accompanied by basic/key skills, strong personal tutorial support and other components identified at initial assessment, such as ESOL, or specialised advice such as childcare.

Infill probably works best in a workshop or learning centre environment where mixed ages and abilities are the norm. This helps to provide the young person with benchmarks for performance and behaviour in a work setting.

"I'll do my hairdressing homework but not anything else. If I weren't doing this programme I wouldn't be here at all"

16-year-old NVQ level 1 Hairdressing student

"learning how to do a job, you can see what it's all for"

17-year-old NVQ level 2 Motor Vehicle Maintenance student

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Case study 12 | Hertford Regional College | Students at the Pre-vocational School, Broxbourne, re-enact *Swallows and amazons*, including raft-building, sailing and canoeing, as part of a team building exercise

Hertford Regional College provides a 'Workskills' programme on which an individual can spend 16–26 weeks. It includes an overview of the world of work, guidance and support, key and work skills development.

The programme is 'roll-on roll-off' so that students can begin whenever they present themselves and can 'roll off' when ready to join an individual programme that will include key skills and either infill to a main vocational programme or choose from a menu of specific vocational tasters. It is planned to add ESOL to the programme in 1999/2000.

"coming to college raised my confidence. I'm now doing more things, like a part-time job and driving lessons – things I'd never have done before"

17-year-old floristry student

Difficulties integrating with older students can be avoided by involving older students as mentors or as 'workmates' or 'buddies'. This provides an 'apprentice' learning model, which reflects a workplace culture while being informally supportive and integrative. It provides the learner with a role model and this can be underpinned by close tutorial support from a vocational teacher.

In addition, the integration of basic/key skills and social and life skills within a vocational programme enables young people to develop employability skills and to 'see what it's all for'.

Tasters leading to full courses

Some colleges provide a menu of vocational taster programmes for post-16 entrants. These are usually drawn from NVQ programmes but can include GNVQ and, where required, GCSE. They provide opportunities to sample work skills that can lead directly to employment. They also invariably include support and basic/key skills as part of an individual programme, and often have a social/life skills element. Tasters may be provided on a multi-agency basis with LEAs, schools, training providers and voluntary organisations. They may be community based and sometimes multi-site.

Tasters, lasting a few weeks or a term, underpinned by close initial guidance and continuing support, have proved an effective introduction to a GNVQ or NVQ programme for 16–17 year olds. Such taster programmes could provide the vocational preparation element of the life skills phase in the Learning Gateway. (See *Case study 12: Hertford Regional College* above.)

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Special programmes

Some colleges have developed specific programmes to meet local needs or those of a particular group. These are often designed jointly with partners such as community and voluntary groups, the LEA or employers, and are sometimes jointly delivered and funded within a multi-agency partnership. They typically include 'Gateway' elements leading to a sequenced mixture of guidance and support, accredited key skills, vocational skills and an activity which may be directly or indirectly related to work or employability skills.
(See *Case study 13: Knowsley Community College* opposite.)

Key success factors

Programmes that introduce disengaged young people into mainstream accredited vocational courses and have good retention and progression demonstrate the following features:

- A 'gently sloping ramp' to vocational training
- An early opportunity to try vocational skills
- Individually customised learning programmes
- Continuing personal advice and guidance with strong personal support from a tutor and a mentor
- Early access to key skills including social and life skills, integrated with vocational training
- Some early celebrated success and accredited steps
- An initially sheltered environment within the college
- Opportunities for progression.

Checklist for colleges

- Which of the key success factors described above apply to your college's provision, and how could each be strengthened?
- What are the retention and progression rates for students who were disengaged before starting college, and how do they compare with those of other 16+ learners?
- Which learning pathways, containing some or most of the above features,
  Does your college already provide, and for whom?
  Could your college most readily provide?
  With whom?
  For whom?

I joined the Army Preparation Course at Knowsley Community College in September 1998. During the course I received an award for the best overall student. The course helped me so that I had more of an idea of what to expect when I went in the Army. It built up my confidence and also helped me when I went to the Army Foundation College, especially using the computers.

I went to the Army Foundation College in January 1999 and passed out in December 1999. I gained the rank of Army Student Sergeant. I then went to Catterick to do the combat infantryman's course which I completed in February 2000. I was awarded best recruit at the passing out ceremony.

Thomas Cashen, pictured above

Case study 13 | Knowsley Community College

Knowsley Community College offers a full-time Army Preparation Course for those wishing to join the Army at 16 years 9 months old. One day per week is delivered by Army personnel in Army facilities. The rest of the timetable includes relevant and motivating skills in the afternoons, such as CLAIT, first aid, key skills and NVQ Technology, and fitness training at the local sports centre each morning. This undoubtedly provides the incentive to continue. Students set their own targets for improved fitness and their own test points which can be as frequent as they wish. Frequency of success and recognition of steady improvement are key motivating factors.

4 Into the Gateway

Every young person entering the Learning Gateway is allocated an individual personal adviser who will provide continued support throughout the Gateway process. The personal adviser should build relationships of trust with all the young people on their caseload and maintain frequent contact with them. It is the personal adviser's role to work with each young person and diagnose their individual needs. Personal advisers provide initial assessment and guidance, and when the young person is ready, the adviser helps them to produce an individual development plan that sets out the results of the assessment, planned action and the support to be provided.

Personal advisers may come from several agencies, including the Youth Service and Probation Service, as well as the Careers Service. Colleges may also provide experienced staff for this role as part of their links with the local Careers Service.

The young people are guided and supported by their personal adviser to help them fulfil the agreed individual development plan – which is likely to include the changing of attitudes and behaviours – so that they can move on to mainstream learning. Personal advisers also help young people to choose and make their way through their life skills options, acting as a broker with partner suppliers and providing them with feedback on young people's requirements.

Many colleges will be centrally involved in providing the life skills options and the mainstream further education to which many will progress from the Learning Gateway. It will therefore be essential for colleges to work closely with the personal adviser to ensure that initial assessment and action planning is a seamless process for the young person, with support, monitoring and review roles gradually moving from the personal adviser to the college tutor.

Issues for colleges

- How can the college work most effectively with Learning Gateway personal advisers?
- How can the college ensure continuity of action planning and individual development?
- How can the college contribute to ensuring seamless continuity and consistency of support and guidance for young people as they move from Learning Gateway to mainstream programme?

Current good practice

- Initial assessment and action planning for the individual development plan have to be sufficiently durable to lead the student into a mainstream programme without needing to be done twice.
- Ideally a common template for use by all the delivering agencies will establish continuity and avoid the sense of having to start again. The plan should:
  - Move with the individual through the process
  - Be subject to periodic review
  - Positively build on recent achievements
  - Recognise strengths as well as weaknesses
  - Appropriately place the student within a multi-level programme according to skills, ability and support needs.

Colleges will be involved in delivering aspects of life skills provision and mainstream routes. It will therefore be important that they become involved in the process of drawing up the individual development plan. Programme decisions can then be informed by the fullest information on the individual and accurately matched with provision. Colleges have valuable experience of collaborating in compiling such plans.

College staff with experience of such a model stress that initial assessment should lead to action planning and the development of reflection and self-advocacy skills. These can be developed in a tutorial relationship that will last throughout the life skills phase, and continue into mainstream education and training.

In the life skills phase there is a focus on employability skills. Once in mainstream provision, this development should become increasingly focused on 'job getting' skills, emerging career aspirations, and qualification goals. Many colleges have embedded such a cumulative approach to developing work skills, life skills and personal target setting in a way that is motivational and enduring.

The initial assessment should identify, in addition to basic/key skills needs, ESOL requirements, particular learning needs and any unrecorded disability such as dyslexia.

Colleges are able to integrate support into vocational programmes when it is implemented and monitored as part of close tutorial support. There are many imaginative means of fine tuning this process to meet the needs of particular students.

"I had difficulty with my speech at first and wouldn't say anything. But now I'm okay – my mates in class say they can't shut me up"

16-year-old female student studying self-advocacy skills

Case study 14 | Plymouth College Plymouth College provides a programme for 16 year olds who have been absent from year 11. A group of 10 is staffed by a lecturer and a support tutor who has 15 hours per week to 'buddy' students. As the students infill individually into their vocational course, their support programme continues and is linked into the work of their vocational tutors. Key skills are taught in small groups of three or four. Students have personal contracts incorporating goals for learning and personal effectiveness, with rewards for good behaviour. The discrete element is costly but balanced by successful infill to the vocational course.

Students in this provision generally felt they had suffered previously from lack of advice and had been confused about where to find it. They also felt they had experienced a lack of positive support in helping them to build a future. They were, however, very positive about the ongoing personal advice and support they were receiving in college. It was often the positive encouragement they encountered in the college that was motivating them to persevere.

Continuity and consistency of advice, guidance and support are essential for young people moving into college both during and on exit from the Learning Gateway. In addition to their personal adviser, they should find a range of support including guidance counsellor, tutor, mentor and possibly other specialist advisers. Careful coordination and planning are

needed to avoid the potential confusion of many different advisers and of the more complex college environment.

Each element of advice and support should have a clear purpose and lasting influence on the process. This in turn will require good timing and efficient progress records, which should accompany the young person moving out of the 'front end'. The hand-over period from personal adviser to other support and guidance staff will be critical.

Support beyond the 'front end' will be as vital as the quality of the learning experience itself, and will rely on existing support systems in colleges. There is much good practice on which to build but it is likely to require greater liaison than many colleges have experienced to date.

Within the college environment the personal tutor is best placed to coordinate and focus other educational guidance and support for the young person.

The tutor can guide the young person through the initial assessment and induction processes as well as orchestrate the provision of appropriate other support and guidance. It is important that support is concerted to identify and help the young person achieve personal indicators of re-engagement, such as:

- Improved interpersonal and social skills
- Improved self-esteem
- Behavioural changes
- Autonomous learning skills
- Motivation to move on
- Development of coping strategies.

Case study 15 Solihull College Solihull College provides each student with a 'named tutor' and has specified the role in a way that covers advice, guidance and learning support. The 'named tutor' tracks the student's progress. A key skills and capability model identifies the skills which students need to develop. These include life skills and those necessary to make the most of their experience at college and achieve their objectives. These are generally the 'learning to learn' skills and tutors have a role in helping students develop them. Named tutors have to help students become aware of how they are learning by:

- Encouraging them to reflect on the content and the process
- Providing feedback
- Helping them plan ahead.

The college staff includes a Student Liaison Team who work with students who are not achieving or are thought to be at risk of dropping out. They are young people with experience of working with the young, and are all trained youth workers. They were chosen as people to whom the students could relate. Their role extends to organising trips, visits and sporting activities, thus providing an all-round 'service'.

"mentors treat you like a friend, not just an adult"

17-year-old student and former excluded pupil

Many colleges are careful to provide some form of sheltered environment within the college for disengaged young people before they are ready for full integration. This may be, for example, a base room with familiar tutors or advisers, a part of the learning centre with known advisers, or a 'quiet room' near the entrance.

The tutorial relationship should be the springboard for introducing mentoring support from an appropriate role model – ideally someone who is closely linked to the same vocational area as the learner.

The 'work buddy' system already described is one such form of mentoring. The 'buddy' is a role model through whom employability and social skills can be developed in the young person they are mentoring.

Case study 16 | Lewisham College | Learning Volunteers show students how to apply their knowledge

Lewisham College is pioneering the use of Learning Volunteers using employees from the local community to mentor students on vocational courses. Their support is intended to help students develop the acumen which underlies employability and give them that extra start in life which will help them qualify and compete for success. Each volunteer, having received training in mentoring, will spend at least four hours per month working with a student.

Learning Volunteers will provide 'know how', practical experience and opportunities to experience how business and employment work. Some volunteers will be senior, experienced managers; others will be young people in work for a few years and in touch with the challenges people face when they start employment. All will provide role models for employability and show their students how to apply their knowledge. The college expects to build a network of Learning Volunteers to enhance its ability to integrate with the local community and support its economy.

The volunteers will be supported by:

- A project worker available on a hotline
- Termly meetings of all volunteers and mentored students
- A handbook of advice for both mentors and mentored students.

Mentoring models need to be customised to meet different needs and priorities. Two models that have proved effective for some colleges have included ones involving 'study buddies' and/or specially trained volunteers:

'Study buddies'

Some mentors are primarily concerned with coaching the student for successful assessment. These 'study buddies' are often paid senior students or recent students.

Colleges that have developed this model say that success criteria for 16–17 year olds' 'study buddies' include being:

- A few years older
- Same ethnic group
- Same sex
- Similar educational background
- Successful in overcoming adversity
- A credible role model.

Specially trained volunteers

Some models seek broader objectives focused on the development of social and life skills. Here colleges are using their own specially trained volunteers gathered from a wide range of roles within the college, such as caretakers, security guards, and technicians. This provides development for the staff as well as a greater chance of a positive response from the young people. Other models seek to lay the foundations for employability. (See *Case study 16: Lewisham College* opposite.)

Some colleges provide mentoring as part of their outreach to local schools and the community. This can itself provide an effective acclimatisation to college.

Case study 17 Barnsley College In an area of severe economic and social disruption, with endemically high levels of unemployment, Barnsley College has developed extensive outreach work in the community for which it has achieved a Beacon award for excellence. The college supports existing students as volunteer mentors to work within local schools. They are drawn from A-level, GNVQ and degree students.

Key success factors

- Provide an initially sheltered environment on entry to the college and the immediate provision of a personal tutor.
- Plan the individual programme jointly with the personal adviser and others involved to ensure seamless action planning and programme review.
- Ensure the effective transfer of records and avoid duplication, for example, of initial assessment.
- Help the young person to set and achieve personal indicators of re-engagement.
- Ensure continuity of advice and support.
- Provide an appropriate form of mentoring oriented towards study, personal or work skills and employability.
- Integrate tutorial and other forms of support within the vocational programme.

Checklist for colleges

- Is the college ready to share the process of initial assessment and its ongoing review with other agencies?
- Can the college, working with other agencies, design a template for the individual action planning process?
- Are the college's tutorial and student support systems sufficiently flexible and robust to meet the needs of disengaged young people?
- Does the college provide an initially sheltered reception before full integration into a mainstream programme?
- How far is tutorial support integrated with mainstream learning through the involvement of appropriately trained vocational programme staff as tutors?
- Does the college have an inclusive model for tutoring entitlement and how well is it implemented?
- How can the college design and provide appropriate mentoring?

5 Individual learning programmes

Following a period of assessment and guidance with a personal adviser, some young people may be able to move directly from the 'front end' of the Learning Gateway to a mainstream learning option. Many, however, will need further help to improve their self-esteem, motivation and basic skills before they are ready to move on. This is where the life skills learning option comes in.

Life skills allows a flexible, tailor-made package of activities and support to be put together to meet the identified needs of the young person. It stands between the 'front end' of the Learning Gateway and mainstream provision. It is inherently transitional and it is therefore important that it builds on what has been achieved with the personal adviser, is underpinned by appropriate guidance and support, and prepares the young person to enter mainstream learning.

As well as vocational preparation opportunities, this phase includes life and social skills, basic and key skills and, where appropriate, English for speakers of other languages. Colleges are already providers of such skills and have a mission to widen participation in their community. They are therefore likely to be major providers both of life skills, and of mainstream education and training.

Issues for colleges

- How can colleges provide a menu of life skills and basic/key skills that both engages and motivates young people and prepares them for mainstream learning?
- How can colleges ensure the development of employability skills?

Current good practice

Designing the relationship between guidance and support, basic/key skills and the main vocational programme has been central to colleges' business for some time. Moving through the Learning Gateway via life skills to a mainstream programme is a process for which colleges' expertise in developing readiness for learning has equipped them well.

In the survey of 13 colleges providing programmes for disengaged young people, there was a clear consensus, based on experience, that the optimum model should provide:

- Early access to 'hands-on' vocational skills
- A 'gently sloping ramp' towards a full vocational programme.

Models for Gateway provision

Most of the surveyed colleges used the 'gently sloping ramp' (see Figure 3 opposite) or parallel tracks (see Figure 4) model to structure their provision. All colleges expressed a preference for one of these paradigms for 16–17-year-old Learning Gateway students because:

- Starting vocational skills early on in the programme is highly motivating, as is the integration of key and vocational skill development
- There is a 'settling in' time during which students are introduced to their programme, other social and learning facilities and other students in a sheltered induction period
- Everything in the programme can be accredited in small but cumulative steps
- They can 'adjust the slope' or vary the mix of elements for the individual without interrupting, over-stretching or delaying the student's programme.

Figure 5 shows how the preferred college paradigms might be combined with that for the Learning Gateway. Showing students the relatedness of social and work skills attunes and motivates them to attain employability.

Various forms of current practice are designed to integrate the development of key and social skills with vocational skills. This is because integration allows learning to take place in more realistic circumstances and so contributes to the development of employability skills in the learner. Or, as one 16-year-old hairdressing student put it, it helps the student 'to get it all together'. Valuing such behaviours makes the acquisition of social and life skills meaningful and helps overcome a sense of personal deficit and failure.

Colleges provide a wide range of options in a suitable environment whether college or community based. As well as key skills these are likely to include sports, recreation and leisure skills, music and other arts, volunteer schemes, community initiatives and preparation for self-employment.

The college's potential as a one-stop shop is enhanced by the integration social and life skills into course menus. It is frequently necessary to provide ESOL alongside key skills and integrate it in the individual learning plan. Illiteracy may also be identified at the initial assessment stage. Individual literacy development can be effectively integrated with IT and the ongoing key skills programme where an immediate start with key skills is available.

Support, initially tailor-made for the individual, can be combined with social skills development and accredited as units. These can be particularly useful in leading to early achievement.

Self-advocacy skills are increasingly developed through means which are themselves designed to strengthen a young person's autonomy and sense of personal control. These include working in an open access learning centre environment, resource-based learning (RBL), including the use of interactive materials, and activity-based programmes. The 'soft skills' are sometimes developed through structured tutorials and behaviour modification plans.

Colleges have been able to create a workplace environment, whether in or out of college, which is motivating because it represents a new world of employment in a virtual way, rather than an extension of the education system which has resulted in failure or rejection for the young person concerned. Many colleges strengthen this ethos by local delivery and by using workplace premises.

Case study 18 | Bishop Auckland College | Bishop Auckland College is developing a number of entry pathways for 16–17 year olds to be delivered locally in a number of relatively isolated communities. Such pathways will have a Gateway format using a multi-agency approach which will include youth workers (possibly as personal advisers), social workers and guidance staff for continuity.

> **"going to college gets you a job. You can learn more about how to do things"**
>
> 17-year-old student bricklayer

> **"you have to make the choice about whether you work or not. So it's up to you, isn't it?"**
>
> 17-year-old NVQ level 2 Plumbing student

Figure 2. The Learning Gateway specification

The 'front end'	Life skills option	Mainstream options
• Personal adviser • Individual development plan	• Life skills • Vocational preparation • Key skills	• FE programmes • Other training route
Continuing personal adviser support and monitoring		

Figure 3. Current practice: the 'gently sloping ramp'

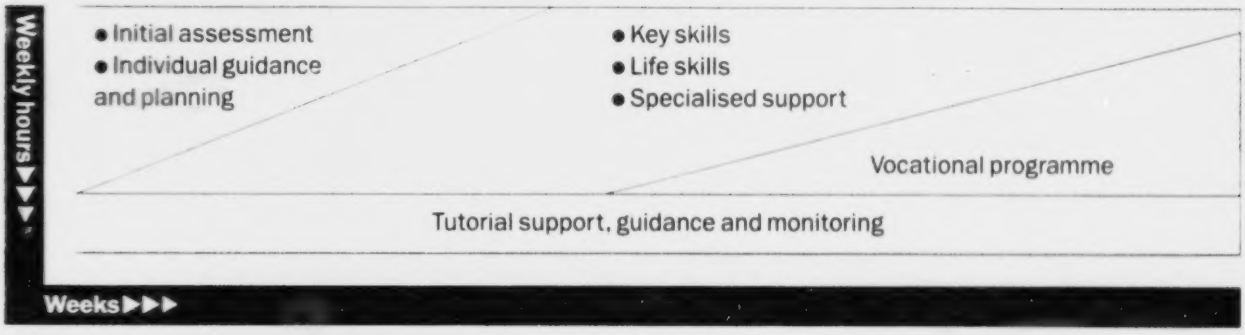


Figure 4. Current practice: parallel tracks

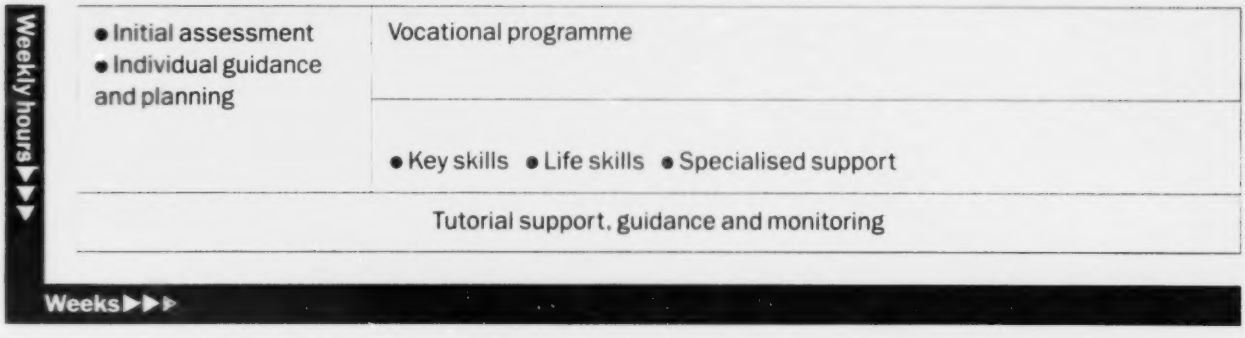
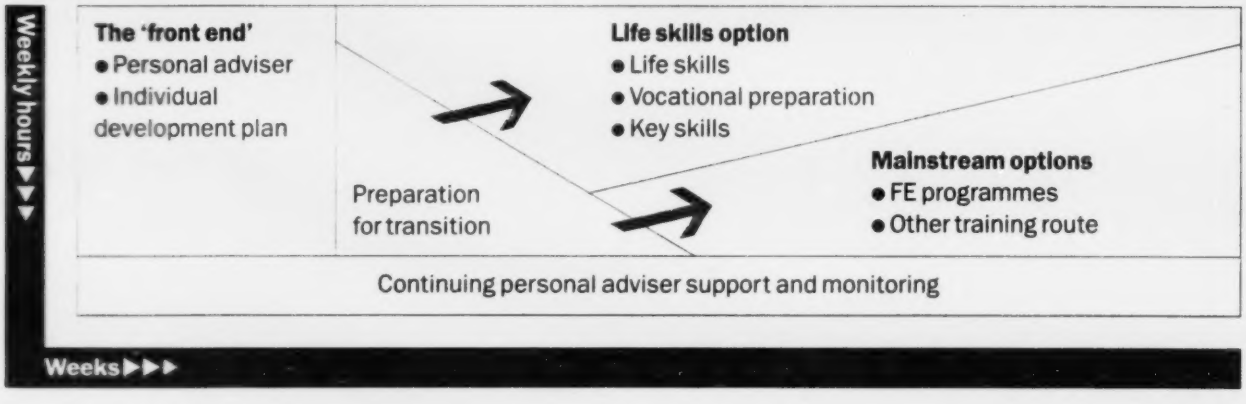


Figure 5. Potential partnership development of practice: the Learning Gateway with a 'sloping ramp'



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Case study 19 | Park Lane College Park Lane College, Leeds, delivers programmes in schools, community centres and bail hostels, as well as at the college itself. These provide customised and accredited 'Gateway' elements such as basic/key skills which can be integrated with any individual learning programme. In 1998/99 they admitted over 100 students in this way.

Surveyed colleges believed that individual learning development plans devised for disengaged 16–17 year olds through the Learning Gateway should be:

- Individual
- Integrated
- Accredited
- Achievable
- Relevant to aspirations and ability
- Focused on progression.

Key success factors

- Provide early 'hands-on' experience of vocational skills which is highly motivating for disengaged young people.
- Design the learning programme as a 'gently sloping ramp', providing an increasing proportion of integrated vocational and key skills.
- Integrate key skills and life skills within vocational programmes so that the young person can see their relevance and inter-relatedness.
- Make the skills and values of employability a learning goal.

Checklist for colleges

- Does the college provide an integrated programme of basic/key skills, social skills and vocational skills?
- Is employability a learning goal and an outcome of the college's social skills and basic/key skills provision?
- Does the college ensure literacy in English through its basic/key skills programme?
- Are basic/key skills accredited?
- Does the college have evidence to show to key partners that success is more guaranteed where there is key/basic skills and main programme integration?

6 Mainstream learning

Many of those who enter the Learning Gateway will progress to a mainstream programme of further education and training in a college. They will be taking a vital step towards the acquisition of accredited work skills that will lead to employment. It is vitally important therefore that the transition for learners to different modes and forms of learning should be a well-managed and supported process.

Issues for colleges

- How can colleges ensure their offer is both coherent and suitable for disengaged young people, with sufficient pre-foundation and foundation programmes which also offer effective progression?
- What forms of assessment and accreditation are appropriate?
- How can young people best achieve some early, celebrated success?
- How do colleges best ensure smooth transition into and between different learning phases?

"parents expect you to do GCSE because they've heard of it, but I was put out of school for 18 months, sitting at home, so how could I? Now I want to do different things"

16-year-old New Start student

Current good practice

The specification for the Learning Gateway includes most of what colleges normally provide for their enrolling students. It is clear from the experience of New Start Partnerships that multi-agency partnerships, with the college as a providing partner, are more effective in ensuring successful transition and re-engagement than partnerships where the college is merely a contracted service provider.

It will be important to ensure that the college can work as a partner in the design and delivery of the local Learning Gateway, in order to mobilise all appropriate expertise throughout the process.

The disengaged at 14–16 are readily defined by the schools system's criteria of school truants, refusers, excluded, etc. Effective methods of identifying 'at risk' learners will also emerge with the development of in-school Learning Mentors and the establishment of the proposed Connexions Service. Recruitment at 16 is therefore more efficient and effective if contact is made before the school leaving date.

Preparation for effective transition from one stage to another is crucial. Referral arrangements should be set up with schools and LEAs to identify referrals in year 11 and potential referrals in year 10. There is value in preparatory initiatives in schools and colleges for year 10s, and where appropriate year 9s. Looking further ahead, such developments may form an important step towards more integrated and progressive 14–19 provision for those who would benefit from a more flexible curriculum, especially pre-16.

▶ Students from **Swansea College** prepare to abseil as part of the college's Youthstart scheme

In many areas with effective school-LEA-college partnerships, work-related learning opportunities are well developed. This enables disengaged or 'at risk' pupils to be introduced to the college in years 9 and 10 with tasters or a pre-vocational programme, key skills and some guidance and support. Colleges report a good rate of progression to college enrolment at 16 for these pupils, and there is a common view that it leads to higher participation and retention post-16.

Case study 20 | **Leeds LEA** | Leeds LEA requires its schools to work with their local college as a 'family'. Pupil referral units generally provide scope for college and LEA managers to arrange joint assessment, guidance, and support, with the college compiling an individual learning programme with each pupil. Pupils are then either infilled individually into existing college courses or given a dedicated group programme. Park Lane College's provision for local disengaged 14–16s, for example, is designed to start early and lead into its 16+ programme, to which more than one in three progress.

Case study 21 | **Highbury College** | Highbury College, Portsmouth, provides one day per week programmes for year 10s and year 11s with NVQ 1 in hairdressing, construction and catering, and accredited motor vehicle maintenance provision. Key skills and careers advice are also available. In addition second year hairdressing students act as mentors to year 10 and year 11 New Start students.

Case study 22 | **Swansea College** | See photos above | Swansea College offers three tracks for three levels of disengagement: a link programme, an alternative curriculum and a Youthstart scheme with off-site delivery and school-based learning support centres run by the college.

Case study 23 | **Knowsley Community College** | Knowsley Community College, in conjunction with the local Education and Business Partnership, provides full day options in work skills such as land maintenance, construction, hairdressing, motor vehicle maintenance, catering and a multi-media programme building on key skills. The options lead towards NVQ level 1.

Most of the surveyed colleges are beginning to collect retention and progression evidence about these young people as they move through to post-16 provision in 1999. It will be possible nationally to track retention and progression of this and subsequent Learning Gateway cohorts to achievement at level 2 from 2000 onwards.

In 1999, surveyed colleges reported progression to mainstream provision by formerly disengaged pupils with pre-16 experience of college as ranging between 20% and 50%. Retention of 14–16 year olds in college provision is reported as ranging from 40% to 90% with an average of about 75% for the 1998/99 cohort reaching age 16. This is not much lower than national averages for mainstream FE provision. Retention of these students post-16 improves each year and is better than that for comparable 16-year-old entrants.

The effectiveness of these initiatives can depend on the quality of information passed on by the school. LEAs do not always control the quality of pupil information and it is variable. Its unreliability can even obscure deep-seated problems such as illiteracy. Some colleges tackle the lack of information by arranging joint college-school-LEA case review meetings and by including contact with parents, where available and appropriate, in pre-entry guidance. Parental involvement can offset poor documentary information and can enlist the family in motivating some disengaged young people. In some cases the TEC helps to broker referral with the supply of work experience places.

Accreditation

Accreditation is essential to validate effort and, by defining success, build motivation. If not managed well, it can also stimulate fear of failure.

Design and timing of accreditation are therefore crucial to shaping the young person's experience of the programme in the most positive way. Colleges see effective and appropriate accreditation having the following characteristics:

- Small steps
- Early success
- A gradually accumulated portfolio
- Measuring 'can do'
- Enabling the student to 'see the point'.

Integrated college provision maximises opportunity for accreditation. Students can receive cumulative and transferable credits for all parts of their programme, including in the initial guidance phase through the development of a learning plan. They can achieve qualifications and units towards qualifications throughout their programme which have a real currency in employment and which enhance self-esteem and motivation.

The NVQ and GNVQ vocational pathways are quite well suited to this block-building approach. There is also a wide range of accreditation available for key skills and social and life skills, including OCN and ASDAN. OCN can also accredit unitised frameworks. These are useful because they provide credit for small steps which lead somewhere. Thus a diverse combination of units can form a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Colleges are adept at putting such programmes together in order to meet the needs of individuals or specific client groups.

Case study 24 | Coleg Glan Hafren | Coleg Glan Hafren, Cardiff, provides a Bridge programme through Include which provides literacy and numeracy, RSA CLAIT for groups of ten, an OCN self-advocacy package, the ASDAN Youth Award, work experience and tutorial. The college provides Edexcel Entry level in two progression streams, one into foundation courses and one directly into employment.

Case study 25 | Solihull College | Solihull College uses OCN accreditation to provide nationally recognised key skills units and pre-foundation award units. Individual programmes include core and key skills and vocational tasters with the design emphasis on 'small bites' and small accreditation steps. Three 11-week sessions enable students to slide from vocational tasters into NVQ level 1 when ready.

Case study 26 | Knowsley Community College | Knowsley Community College has developed a vocational value-added banding system as part of its long-term plan to use the concept of 'value added' across the curriculum for full-time students in GNVQ, vocational and access courses. The system has been developed to overcome the limitations of established schemes for A-level courses which do not help students without formal qualifications. Value-added judgements are based on:

- Prior academic achievement
- Level and date of last study
- Initial interview assessment
- Initial diagnostic assessment
- First piece of assessed work.

This provides an indication of staying power, motivation, key skills level and ability to cope with course demands.

Portfolio building, assessment and profiling are useful for disengaged young people because they provide a record, certifying a range of accomplishments, behaviour and practical achievements which have a direct bearing on employability. This is particularly important in the absence of adequate or positive school records. Where there are records from other agencies, colleges are strategically well placed to be the collection point where those records can inform initial assessment and be synthesised to form a comprehensive unified record.

There is a general view that celebrating the successes of these young people should both be ongoing through:

- Feedback on progress
- The accumulation of small steps of achievement
- The provision of general support

and marked by a more formal end-of-session ceremony.

Many of the colleges hold awards ceremonies for these learners. They are a great morale booster and greatly appreciated by the young people and their families.

There are many students in further education for whom a sideways move is often more appropriate than onward progression. It can be particularly helpful for some students with learning difficulties and many disengaged young people. The climbing frame model in the Learning Gateway is more appropriate for them than linear progression ladders.

The accreditation structure is now more amenable to this, particularly with the development of unitisation, NVQ 1s and their equivalents, and new Entry level packages. Developments in the funding methodology are seeking to make flexibility within a climbing frame model more feasible. When lateral transfer is recognised as progress, much can be done to provide such students with a range of related work skills at a given level. A good example of this is in the construction field where students may cover a wide range of skills, for example carpentry, plumbing and painting and decorating, possibly all at the same level.

Key success factors

- Have a clear policy to provide for under-16 learners who are 'at risk' or disengaged. Curriculum models that achieve this include:
  - Early tasters for years 9 and 10
  - Starting NVQ-based vocational programmes in years 10 and 11
  - Easy and ongoing access to college guidance, Careers Service and job search
  - Parent and family events
  - Use of college learning centre/IT facilities
  - A 'home' base in the college – a base room or meeting space.
- Work in school/LEA multi-agency partnerships to address the needs of these learners at Key Stage 4 where appropriate.
- Ensure that accreditation allows:
  - Measuring value-added increments
  - Measuring 'can do' skills
  - Small steps
  - Early celebrated success
  - A gradually accumulated portfolio
  - Demonstrable relevance for the learner.
- Unitise some accreditation to provide achievement in small steps for disengaged young people.
- Celebrate success as a means of supporting and motivating students.
- Provide opportunities for lateral progression.

Checklist for colleges

- Does the college work with partners to provide opportunities which are appropriate for 14–16-year-old, disengaged young people?
- Does the college provide a range of accreditation that is appropriate for clients of the Learning Gateway?
- Does the college offer unitised accreditation?
- Does the college provide opportunities for lateral progression?
- Does the college effectively celebrate student success and mark the achievements of its 16–17-year-old students?

7 Evaluation and quality assurance

Assuring quality

Colleges have developed a number of ways of checking and evaluating the quality of their particular provision for disengaged young people. Most use the self-assessment, action planning cycle to set targets and record outcomes in relation to attendance, retention and achievement. Some include more detailed targets such as punctuality, behaviour standards and progression.

Others, such as Knowsley Community College (see *Case study 26: Knowsley Community College*, page 32, have developed ways of widening the use of value added, to monitor and measure student progress. It is effectively used to encourage students to aim higher and raise their aspirations. Many colleges are thinking through similar approaches.

However, such measures may not be included in a standard report from the college's computerised management information system unless they are a component of the FEFC's data requirement. This means it can be difficult to produce reports on aggregate performance where 'non-standard' measures are used. This is compounded for groups of disengaged young people who enter mainstream provision on an infill basis, at which point they usually cease to be counted as one of the 'Gateway' group. While such integration is beneficial to the individual learner, it may not help the college to demonstrate 'distance travelled'.

Some colleges have developed quality standards specifically for provision for 14–16 year olds in liaison with schools and LEAs. Others are working in multi-agency partnerships to develop an overall quality framework for work with disengaged young people, based on experience with the New Start Partnership initiative.

The Merseyside Quality Assurance Framework[1] is an example of such collaboration. It bases its quality assurance on five principles:

1. **Entitlement**: the young people are entitled to a learning programme that matches their needs and allows them a voice in determining what is expected of them.
2. **Commitment**: the provider has a clear commitment towards delivering a programme that meets the needs of the young people involved.
3. **Management**: the programme is managed in a way that is totally dedicated to support young people in their learning and improve their future life chances.
4. **Process**: the teaching and learning process involves the young people in a range of activities that will assist them to develop higher levels of self-esteem and motivation.
5. **Partnership**: purposeful relationships and effective liaison with other organisations support the delivery of a coherent and well-balanced programme.

1. Further information on the Merseyside Quality Framework is available from: Brian Jones, Project Manager, New Start Merseyside, Career Decisions Ltd Head Office, 2nd Floor, Minster House, Paradise Street, Liverpool L1 3EU Tel: 0151 709 8276 e-mail: brianj@career.u-net.com

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The DfEE is undertaking a national evaluation of the Learning Gateway and its impact. Meanwhile the quality of service locally will need to be assured. It is essential that all those involved develop standards and procedures for monitoring and evaluation, based on rigorous self-assessment procedures and action planning to ensure continuous improvement.

A quality framework for the Learning Gateway will be needed which:

- Takes account of national targets and local priorities
- Provides a multi-agency structure of accountability
- Integrates with existing college quality systems
- Takes account of value-added measures.

Aspects of the Learning Gateway that should be evaluated include:

- The holistic approach to young people's needs
- Effective links between agencies and transfer of information
- A stimulating and supportive learning environment
- Relationships of mutual respect
- Equality of opportunity
- Customised individual development plans with appropriate, achievable targets
- Programmes that are flexible in content, location and timing
- Progress and progression at individual and aggregated cohort levels.

8 Actions for colleges

This section summarises the action points devised for colleges. It is presented as a checklist, so that it may be used as an assessment tool for those already with significant provision for disengaged young people and as a developmental tool for those who wish to move into this area of provision.

Indicative ratings are

1. Where practice/policy is well established and internalised as a feature of the college's profile.
2. Where there is significant good practice on a particular action but it is not consistently applied or totally embedded across the organisation.
3. Where there are patches of good practice but with many opportunities for further development.
4. Where practice remains under-developed and action needs to be taken to investigate the situation or develop good practice.

The checklist follows overleaf.

Action checklist	Current rating 1	2	3	4	Action needed to develop
Working together					
Determine the college's role within the Learning Gateway process in terms of involvement and the sharing of expertise					
Identify and set up a working relationship with all relevant partners					
Ensure that the partnership has a strategic dimension					
Ensure that the partnership evaluates its effectiveness					
Determine what advice and guidance services the college can deliver in the community, and how best to do so					
Decide the college's role in delivering learning at outreach locations for disengaged young people					
Ensure that outreach students have access to college resources					
Plan to re-engage more young people in further education and training					

Action checklist	Current rating 1	2	3	4	Action needed to develop
The learning pathway					
Ensure the college provides a learning pathway that offers:					
A 'gently sloping ramp' to vocational and other mainstream education and training					
An early 'hands-on' taste of vocational skills					
An individual pathway with continuing advice and support from a personal tutor and mentor					
Basic/key skills and social/life skills integrated with vocational training					
Early celebrated success with small accredited steps emphasising progression					
An initial 'home' base in the college					
Monitor attendance, retention, achievement and progression for Learning Gateway students					
Into the Gateway					
Arrange with other agencies and the personal adviser to ensure that initial assessment, action planning, the negotiation and implementation of an individual development plan is a seamless single process leading to re-engagement and success					
Ensure that tutorial support is sufficiently flexible and robust and that it is an integral part of the vocational programme					
Develop an appropriate mentoring system					

Action checklist	Current rating 1	2	3	4	Action needed to develop
Individual learning plans					
Decide what menu options the college could potentially offer					
Ensure that employability is both a value and a learning goal for life skills and basic/key skills					
Ensure that all students can achieve literacy in English to employable standard					
Ensure basic/key skills are accredited					
Learning in mainstream					
Decide what appropriate provision the college can make for 14–16-year-old disengaged young people					
Review the accreditation available in the college for its appropriateness for students from the Learning Gateway					
Ensure success by 16–17-year-old students is celebrated effectively in the college					
Develop opportunities for both onward and lateral progression					
Ensure that everything is being done to support Key Stage 4 young people at risk of disengagement both within and outside the college by having:					
A coherent work-related learning policy and practice with local schools					
Partnership provision to enhance the curriculum offer and maximise flexibility					
Community and employment links for enrichment activities					
Comprehensive tutorial support service					

Appendices

Appendix 1

Glossary

ALIS A-level Information System
ASDAN Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network
CLAIT Computer Literacy and Information Technology
EBD Educational and behavioural difficulties
ESF European Social Fund
ESOL English for speakers of other languages
FEFC Further Education Funding Council
GNVQ General National Vocational Qualification
IT Information technology
LEA Local education authority
NVQ National Vocational Qualification
OCN Open College Network
OFSTED Office for Standards in Education
PRU Pupil Referral Unit
RBL Resource-based learning
RSA Royal Society of Arts
SEN Special educational needs
SRB Single Regeneration Budget
TEC Training and Enterprise Council

Connexions strategy

The Connexions strategy sets out to create a step change in participation and attainment through the teenage years. It aims to ensure that increasing numbers of young people have access to the services they need, follow appropriate and high quality learning opportunities and make a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood and working life. There are four key themes to the strategy:

- Developing a flexible curriculum that engages different young people and leads to the achievement of relevant, sought-after qualifications
- Ensuring high-quality provision in school sixth forms, FE colleges and work-based learning
- Targeting financial support for those in learning; and
- Providing outreach, information, advice, support and guidance.

Connexions Service

At the heart of the Connexions strategy will be the new Connexions Service. It will provide a radical new approach to guiding and supporting all young people (via a network of personal advisers) throughout their teenage years in their transition to adulthood and working life. The Connexions Service will play a central role in helping to deal with problems experienced by young people, removing any wider barriers to effective engagement in learning that young people are suffering. The new service will be phased in from April 2001 with a clear emphasis on building on best practice.

New Start

New Start is a key strand of the Connexions strategy. It recognises the need for a coherent approach in improving access to learning and reducing the numbers of young people not in full-time education, employment or training. It is not a programme but a strategy which aims to bring back into learning those 14–17 year olds who have dropped out of education and training or are at risk of doing so. At its heart is multi-agency partnership working at local level involving a wide range of organisations e.g. schools, colleges of further education, local authorities, careers services, Training and Enterprise Councils, Youth Service, social services, and the voluntary sector. New Start helped paved the way for the Learning Gateway and will be an important building block in many areas for the Connexions Service.

www.connexions.gov.uk

Further Information about the Connexions strategy and the Connexions Service is available on the Internet. The address is www.connexions.gov.uk

Appendix 2

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Appendix 3

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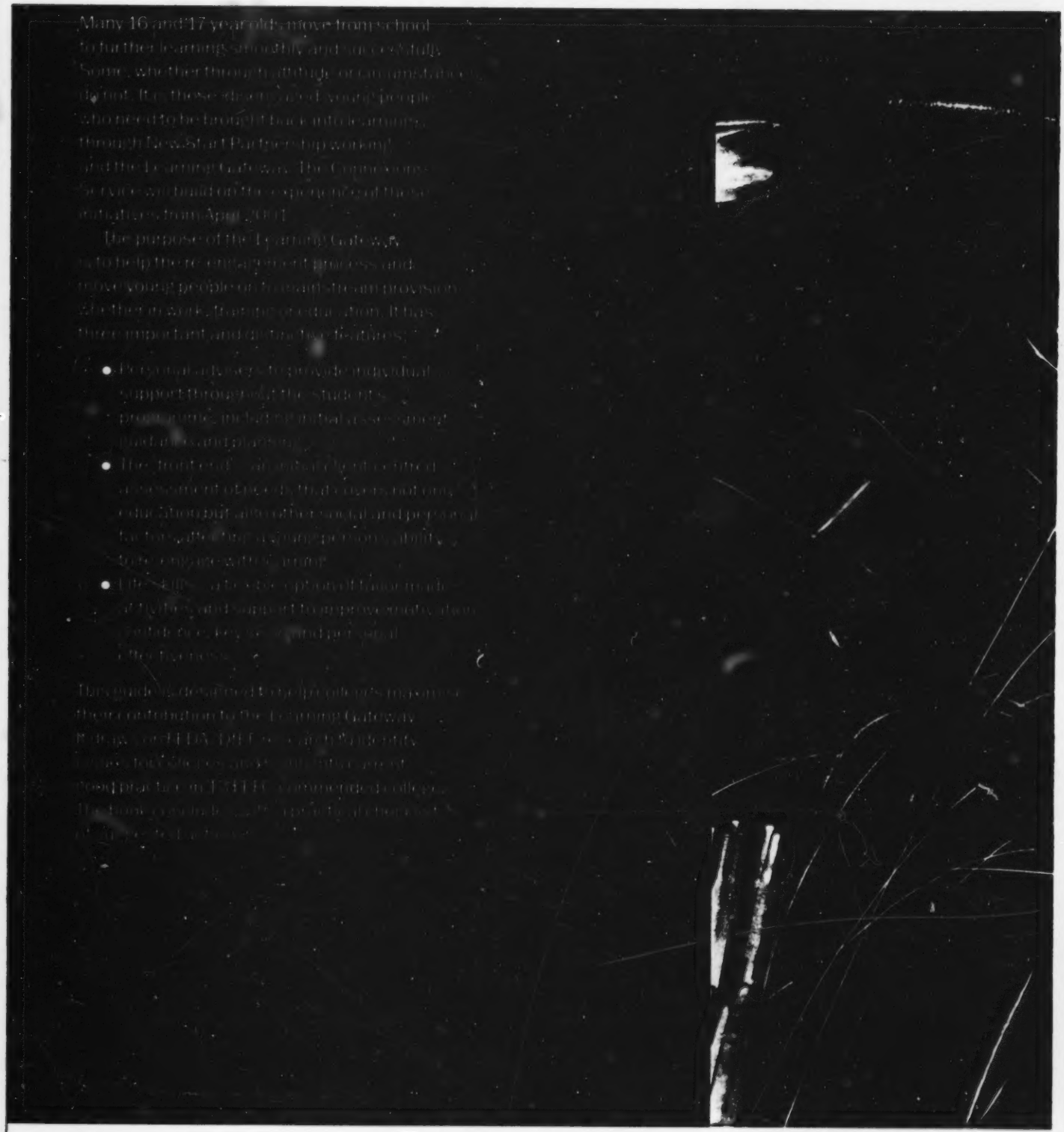

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ISBN 1853385417